

Promising Practice: Increasing Opportunities for HPOG Participants Through Partnerships Blackfeet Community College (BCC)

For the Issksiniip Project of Blackfeet Community College (BCC), strategic partnerships have been a key ingredient in facilitating participants' educational advancement and employment opportunities. The project has established valuable partnerships with several institutions of higher education as well as a number of community organizations.

Formal relationships between the tribal college (BCC) and a number of four-year colleges make it easier for BCC students to transfer from the two-year BCC to a four-year institution, thus allowing them to move up the career ladder. Partners include four state colleges—the University of Montana, Montana State University, Montana State University–Billings, and Montana State University–Great Falls—and one other tribal college, Salish Kootenai College. These relationships increase potential employment opportunities for students through a statewide approach.

Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) govern the partnerships and specify the roles and responsibilities of each group. The MOUs help build capacity for long-term sustainability between BCC and the four-year institutions.

Participants are able to maintain HPOG support as they move up healthcare career ladders. Each partner institution provides academic advisement, academic support, retention assistance, mentoring, and career support for HPOG students. The BCC Issksiniip Project provides case management and support for HPOG participants who may need childcare or transportation. HPOG provides gas cards or Blackfeet Transportation bus passes.

BCC also has cooperative working agreements signed between its HPOG program and a number of community organizations—Indian Health Service, Blackfeet Manpower, Blackfeet Care Center, Blackfeet Tribal Health Department, Glacier County EMS, Cut Bank Job Service, and Benefis Health Systems—to allow for transferability of information and recipients. As a result, Issksiniip Project students are able to formulate relationships with various employers and benefit from fluid transmission of job trends, job openings, internships, and job shadowing opportunities.

The partnerships create a mechanism for professionals to come to BCC and speak to students about health professions. The partners conduct workshops on various topics, including, but not limited to, professional development, soft skills, and resume writing. The partnerships help to create a smooth transition for students from academic setting to employment.